

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGUI 00333 231546Z

ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US, CT

SUBJECT: BOKASSA INTERVIEW WITH AMERICAN JOURNALIST

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HIS COMING TO POWER IN 1966 PRESIDENT BOKASSA GAVE AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO A PRIVATE AMERICAN JOURNALIST, EUGENE WORRELL. MR. WORRELL, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF UPI, IS THE PROPRIETOR OF A CHAIN OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS AND TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE SOUTH AND WEST. HE CAME TO THE CAE TO HUNT WITH THE AMERICAN SAFARI COMPANY, SACAF. AT THE GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST HE SUBMITTED HIS QUESTIONS TO THE EMPEROR IN WRITING AND RECEIVED WRITTEN RESPONSES. (TEXT POUCHED AF/C AND AF/P). IN ADDITION HE AND THE AMBASSADOR WERE RECEIVED IN PRIVATE AUDIENCE AT BOBANGUI, AT WHICH MR. WORRELL WAS ABLE TO POSE SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS.

2. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERVIEW FOCUSED ON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GOCAE'S RELATIONS WITH THE GREAT POWERS AND BOKASSA'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN AFRICA. BOKASSA STRESSED THAT AFRICAN PROBLEMS SHOULD BE SOLVED BY THE AFRICANS THEMSELVES WITHOUT ANY FOREIGN INTERVENTION. THE GREAT POWERS

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PAGE 02 BANGUI 00333 231546Z

SHOULD NOT CONSIDER AFRICA AS A PROPITIOUS AREA FOR THE EXPANSION OF THEIR HEGEMONY. INTERVENTION, HOWEVER, IN FAVOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WOULD BE WELCOMED. BOKASSA INDICATED THAT AID FROM ALL SOURCES INCLUDING THE USSR AND THE US WAS WELCOME AS LONG AS NO "POLITICAL OR IDEOLOGICAL" STRINGS WERE ATTACHED. SPECIFICALLY WITH REGARD TO US AID BOKASSA SAID IT WAS "INSUFFICIENT" CONSIDERING (A) THE ECONOMIC POWER OF

SUCH A GREAT FRIENDLY COUNTRY; (B) THE GOOD RELATIONS WHICH HAD ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED OUR RELATIONSHIP; AND (C) ABOVE ALL THE "CONSTANT AND EFFECTIVE" SUPPORT WHICH THE CAE HAD ALWAYS GIVEN TO THE US.

3. BOKASSA DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON OBSERVING THAT THE CAE'S POLICY WAS GUIDED BY A DESIRE TO AVOID INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER STATES. HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD PURSUE A "REALISTIC" POLICY OF COOPERATION TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SPECIAL REALITIES OF EACH COUNTRY.

4. WHEN ASKED WHAT THE UNITED STATES COULD DO THAT IT IS NOT NOW DOING HE REPLIED "THE RAILROAD FROM BANGUI TO THE SEA." HOWEVER, UNDER SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONING BOKASSA SAID THAT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT WAS THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROAD SYSTEM FROM BANGUI TO DOUALA. THIS COULD BE DONE MORE RAPIDLY AND WOULD HAVE AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY'S PRINCIPAL PROBLEM - ITS LANDLOCKED POSITION.

5. COMMENT: I ACCOMPANIED MR. WORRELL ON HIS INTERVIEW AND HELPED WITH NECESSARY INTERPRETATION. AS IN MY EARLIER MEETING (BANGUI 0308) BOKASSA WAS MOST GRACIOUS AND FULL OF PRAISE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ITS POLICIES. HE AGAIN WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO CONVEY THE IMPORTANCE WHICH HE ATTACHED TO FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, AND HIS DESIRE TO SUPPORT OUR INTERESTS. HE SEEMED PLEASED THAT AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST WAS SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN THE CAE AND INVITED WORRELL TO HIS CORONATION.
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PAGE 03 BANGUI 00333 231546Z

6. FOR AF/P: WE WILL BE MOST INTERESTED IN WHATEVER STORIES WORRELL SUCCEEDS IN PLACING IN THE AMERICAN PRESS. I WOULD HOPE TO GIVE BOKASSA COPIES WITH TRANSLATIONS IF, AS I ANTICIPATE, THEY ARE REASONABLY OBJECTIVE. WORRELL LEFT BANGUI FAVORABLY IMPRESSED WITH HIS STAY IN THE CAE AND SEEMED SYMPATHETICALLY DISPOSED TOWARDS THE COUNTRY AND ITS LEADERSHIP. (FYI: - AF/P MAY WISH TO CONTACT MR. WORRELL AT 7 SUNSET CIRCLE, FARMINGTON, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA FOR COPIES OF ARTICLES WHICH APPEAR IN MR. WORRELL'S PAPERS.)
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